



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# News Release

*Pacific Islands External Affairs Office*

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## **Draft Recovery Plan for the Newcomb's Snail Released for Review**

A draft recovery plan that identifies recovery actions for the threatened Newcomb's snail was released today for public review and comment. The draft recovery plan developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service focuses on actions that will maintain and improve habitat and ensure that a single catastrophic event will not reduce populations.

Newcomb's snail (*Erinna newcombi*) is one of four freshwater snail species native to Hawai'i in the family Lymnaeidae. Adult snails are approximately a quarter-inch long and 0.12 inches wide. Newcomb's snail is unique among the Hawaiian lymnaeids in that the shell spire typically associated with lymnaeids has been completely lost. The result is a smooth, black shell formed by a single oval whorl about a quarter-inch long. The snail feeds on algae and other material growing on submerged rocks. Eggs are attached to underwater rocks or vegetation and the snail's entire life cycle is tied to the stream system in which the adults live.

The distribution of Newcomb's snail is restricted to 10 small sites (subpopulations) located along 6 streams in the interior of the island of Kaua'i. The range of the snails is usually limited to a few square meters of a single side-channel or single waterfall in the stream where the snail lives. Historically, Newcomb's snail was found in Hanakoa, Hanakapi'ai, Wainiha, and Hanapepe Streams, but these populations are thought to be extirpated. The known populations of Newcomb's snail total approximately 6,000 to 7,000 individuals. The great majority of these snails, perhaps more than 90 percent, are thought to be restricted to just two of the 10 sites.

The primary threats to the snail come from introduced, non-native species and habitat destruction resulting from the reduction or elimination of flows in streams and springs. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, could threaten the snail's habitat. Non-native predators of the snail are the rosy glandina snail that preys mostly on other snails, two species of non-native marsh flies that prey on eggs and adults of freshwater snails, the green swordtail fish, the American bullfrog, and the wrinkled frog. Given the limited distribution and low population numbers of this species, significant habitat destruction from reduced stream flows or a natural disaster could destroy an entire population of Newcomb's snail.

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To prevent the extinction of the Newcomb's snail and ultimately recover the species within its historic range, the Service recommends conducting scientific research, maintaining and improving habitat for the snail by protecting water flows, conducting predation studies, and working with other governmental and private entities to protect and restore snail habitat. Details outlining needed research, as well as long-term monitoring, are included in the draft recovery plan for the snail.

According to the draft recovery plan, the Newcomb's snail may be considered for delisting if snail populations are stable or increasing through natural reproduction for a minimum of five consecutive years, and populations are located in a minimum of eight separate watersheds that are geographically distributed throughout its range. In addition, minimum flows must be established for stream reaches where populations of Newcomb's snails are present.

The Service believes these criteria should provide for the maintenance of genetic diversity that occurs in natural populations of Newcomb's snail by protecting all known natural populations and their habitats. They should provide some assurance that a single catastrophic event, such as a hurricane, will not destroy all populations of this species. More specific delisting criteria, including the number of populations required to reach delisting, can be developed or modified when completion of some of the recovery tasks provides necessary information on the life history and ecology of this species and its predators.

Newcomb's snail was listed as a threatened species on January 26, 2000. Critical habitat for the species was designated on August 20, 2002, in the *Federal Register*.

The availability of the draft recovery plan for a 60-day public comment period was announced in the *Federal Register* on March 24. Copies of the draft recovery plan are available through the Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office at 808 792 9400. Written comments may be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.